

io COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

When he had completed his reading for the moment, he proceeded to write an account of the particular episode he had been studying. His nephew describes minutely what. Macaulay's method of composition was. The first step was to compose a rapid sketch of the episode.

As soon as he had got into his head all the information relating to any particular episode in his History, (such, for instance, as Argyll's expedition to Scotland, or the attainder of Sir John Fenwick, or the calling in of the clipped coinage,) he would sit down and write off the whole story at a headlong pace ; sketching in the outlines under the genial and audacious impulse of a first conception ; and securing in black and white each idea, and epithet, and turn of phrase, as it flowed straight from his busy brain to his rapid fingers. His manuscript, at this stage, to the eyes of any one but himself, appeared to consist of column after column of dashes and flourishes, in which a straight line, with a half-formed letter at each end, and another in the middle, did duty for a word.¹

Then came a second and revised version written out at full length.

As soon as Macaulay had finished his rough draft he began to fill it in at the rate of six sides of foolscap every morning ; written in so large a hand, and with such a multitude of erasures, that the whole six pages were, on an average, compressed into two pages of print.²

Sept. 22. Wrote my regular quantity—six foolscap pages

of my scrawl, which will be about two pages
in print. I
hope to hold on at this pace through the
greater part of the
year. If I do this, I shall, by next September,
have rough-
hewn my third volume.³

This portion he called his ' task ', and he
was never
quite easy unless he completed it daily.
More he seldom

¹ Ibid. pp. 224-5. a Ibid. p. 225.

³ Journal, 1849. Ibid. p. 267.